



# SHAWNEE NATIONAL FOREST

## A Year of Shawnee Successes!

*Celebrating accomplishments Forest-wide for 2013!*

**Allen Nicholas**  
Forest Supervisor

**Tim Pohlman**  
District Ranger

**Amanda Patrick**  
Public Affairs  
Officer

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### *Looking Back on a Year of Accomplishments and Successes...*

What a year it has been. We often find ourselves saying this so many times in our lives, but as I look back on 2013, I am amazed at how quickly time slipped away. While winter is in full-swing, spring will soon arrive, meaning warmer days, trees and flowers budding/blossoming, and lots of great places to explore and connect with nature. As the seasons unfold in the months ahead, please know that we look forward to seeing you.

Before we get too busy with 2014 though, I am excited to share with you a look back at the Forest's achievements and accomplishments through the **2013 Shawnee National Forest Year of Successes**. I know for me, this is a wonderful time to reflect and celebrate our good work. I know so often, days fill with conference calls, meetings, emails, trips to the field and more. In moments like this, however, I find myself reminding those I work with to take time to revel in the successes we have achieved. It is something that we do not do enough. So as another year has come to a close, and we are off to a running start in 2014, I am grateful for the chance to share our **2013 Year of Successes** with you.

The U.S. Forest Service motto is "Caring for the land and serving people." During the previous year, I've seen our staff strive to meet that goal. For this, I wish to thank all Forest employees for a year of positive growth, work and overall achievement. Whether through partnerships, cost saving measures or simply thinking outside the box, each member of the Shawnee National Forest team has gone above and beyond to meet needs and to be good stewards of the public land entrusted to us on behalf of the American people.

And so, as we enjoy the new year ahead, I wish you and yours a joyous and prosperous 2014!

**Allen Nicholas**  
**Forest Supervisor**



## *Natural Resources at a Glance...*

### **Youth Conservation Corps**

The Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) crew assisted natural resource staff for 3 weeks during the summer of 2013. Accomplishments included planting 4,500 bare-root seedlings in 30 acres of bottomlands, improving accessibility to the stocked ponds across the Forest and pulling non-native invasive weeds.



### **Maintenance**

Employees mowed 30 miles of levees, trimmed and maintained over 100 water control structures and performed maintenance of 9 deep well pumps and electric motors, as well as conducting ditch cleaning, levee repairs, annual pumping and annual draining operations.

### **Invasive Species**

Through the efforts of the natural resource crew, efforts were made to focus on targeting Garlic Mustard populations this year. The team treated over 100 acres of the non-native invasive plant at multiple sites across the Shawnee. A majority of the work was completed via manually hand pulling the plants; however a small portion included herbicide applications at administrative sites.

### **Big Muddy, Inahgeh, LaRue Management and Wetland Restorations**



A total of approximately 200 acres of wetland restoration at LaRue and 87 acres of soil and water resource improvement were completed in 2013.

### **Lake, Pond and Stream Habitat Enhancement**

Natural resource personnel completed work to improve stream habitat on over 5 miles of streams across the Shawnee. Specifically, large woody debris was placed at several locations to provide shade and cover for aquatic invertebrates and fishes. The lake and pond work included adding brush and trees to the ponds for habitat, as well as brushing and mowing to improve access.

### **Oakwood Bottoms Greentree Reservoir**

The Shawnee completed another successful year of maintaining and managing the operations at Oakwood Bottoms Greentree Reservoir. Next year will mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Oakwood Bottoms site.



Oakwood Bottoms provides 4,700 acres of critical waterfowl migration habitat in the fall, winter and early spring, and important songbird, reptile and amphibian habitat in the spring and summer. The bottomland forest site is also home to the Shawnee's largest known Indiana bat maternity colony. This unique area continues to be the center of many partnerships and conservation efforts.

### **Stone Face Natural Area**

The natural resource and YCC crews teamed up to replace 230 feet of split rail fence at the Stoneface Natural Area. The fence is located on the bluff and acts as a barrier so that people are not trampling the federally threatened Mead's Milkweed plant. The crew worked for over 2 weeks pulling the material up the bluff and constructing the fence, section by section.





## ***Shawnee National Forest: Working with Partners***

### ***Collaboration and Support Come Together to Restore Kinkaid Lake in Southern Illinois***

On Friday, January 25th, 2013, a group of fifteen people met at the Illinois State Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity office in Marion, Illinois to discuss the opportunities and challenges affecting tourism and commerce around Kinkaid Lake, specifically the northwest area of the lake around Johnson Creek Recreation Area. The group represented a wide variety of agencies and community representatives, including the following: Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR); U.S. Forest Service - Shawnee National Forest; Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Kinkaid-Reed's Creek Conservancy District (KRCCD), City of Ava, Illinois (two citizen representatives), and Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) (who were present by teleconference). Bill Stanhouse and Kim Watson represented the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity.

Due to heavy silt and sediment, areas of Kinkaid Lake are no longer suitable for many types of water recreation that were common in the area decades ago. Though water-based recreation loss is of concern, a greater worry with the sedimentation is the lake's role as a source of drinking water for surrounding communities.

During the meeting, initial discussion centered on past activities of KRCCD to minimize sedimentation into the lake, including shoreline stabilization, and those partners who had worked with them in these efforts. Future activities will include more shoreline and gully stabilization. The development and finalization of an MOU, between the U.S. Forest Service, KRCCD, and IDNR, is in progress to help ensure these continued partnership ef-



orts. One request made by the Ava citizen representatives was for access to a deeper port and adding a boat ramp at another point on the lake to take the place of the now less usable boat ramp at Johnson Creek.

In recent years, concerned citizens have worked to form Kinkaid Area Watershed Project (KAWP) in order to help address the issues created by an increase in heavy silt and sediment entering the lake. IDNR has worked to improve fish habitat by the installation of fish attractors and spawning structures into various areas of the lake along with stocking measures. Food plots for wildlife have been created, and volunteers now gather annually for a Kinkaid Lake Cleanup (April 20). As shoreline and gully stabilization seem to be especially critical, KCRRD has applied for an IEPA 319 Grant, which would help provide funding for 2,500 feet of shoreline stabilization and 1,000 feet of gully stabilization work. All total, KCRRD has worked with partners, including the Shawnee National Forest, to complete over 30,000 feet of shoreline stabilization along with sediment control structures in the Kinkaid Watershed.

## ***National Wild Turkey Federation & Shawnee National Forest Connect Youth with the Outdoors Through the First JAKES Event***



In partnership with the Illinois State Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf), along with several local NWTf chapters, the Shawnee National Forest (NF) served as host for a JAKES Event on the Pennant Bar Openland site. JAKES, which stands for Juniors Acquiring Knowledge, Ethics and Sportsmanship, is dedicated to informing, educating and involving youth in wildlife conservation and the wise stewardship of our natural resources. Through such events, NWTf chapters provide youth the chance to explore their outdoor world through fun events that help pass on the traditions of responsible hunting, as well as teach the principles of habitat management and hunting ethics and safety.

Targeting youth ages 10 to 16, the Shawnee's JAKES event was held on September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2013, from 11am to 5pm and included an afternoon of hunting doves for the children and their parents/guardians, along with lunch for all attendees. The excitement of the kids was contagious as they walked to their pre-drawn blind locations. Soon after, the dove hunt began, and with enthusiasm building, many of the kids participating were experiencing their first ever hunt. At the end of the day, everyone got to do a lot of shooting, and several dozen doves were harvested; however, most importantly, children were exposed to the great outdoors and the hunting tradition. The weather turned out perfect as well, and with immense positive feedback received, a great time was had by all.

This event was the result of months of planning and preparation by NWTf volunteers from three local chapters, including the Shawnee Hills Longbeards, Johnson County Wild Turkey, and the Little Egypt Longbeards. The Illinois State Chapter of NWTf contributed funding for the fertilizer and tractor rental while the local chapters contributed the sunflower seed that local volunteers planted in the spring. Additionally, a local farmer and NWTf volunteer contributed approximately 35 bushels of wheat seed for additional plantings. Through such generous support, there was enough seed donated to provide similar habitat on four Shawnee NF openland sites so that further hunting opportunities for the public were provided as the event was taking place. Shawnee personnel planted the donated seed at the three additional sites and later mowed and disked all of the dove fields in preparation for both dove season and for the JAKES event.

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## ***Shawnee NF Partners with Bat Conservation International to Improve Indiana Bat Habitat in Southern Illinois***

With a successful partnership and shared mission, Bat Conservation International (BCI), a private, non-profit conservation group dedicated to preserving and sustaining diverse and healthy bat populations, has completed a third year of work in 2013 with the Shawnee National Forest (NF) to improve habitat for rare bats on national forest lands.

In 2010, BCI donated the materials and provided personnel to construct a second bat gate at Rich's Cave in Union County, Illinois. Rich's Cave, a site where historically, between 1,000 and 2,000 Indiana bats wintered, had experienced declines in winter population numbers, suspected to be caused by unauthorized public access during the winter hibernation period. In 2010, with assistance provided by wildlife biologists from the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests (both located in western Virginia), a traditional bat gate was constructed across the front entrance to Rich's Cave. This was followed up by the construction and installation of a second gate, made possible by the assistance provided by BCI.

In the summer of 2012, wildlife personnel from the Shawnee NF and BCI, joined again by team members from the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests, teamed up to improve habitat for the Indiana bat on the Shawnee via the construction of a cupola bat gate across the entrance to Ellis Cave. The Shawnee NF acquired this important Indiana bat cave in 2011. While under private ownership, access to Ellis Cave was strictly controlled by the private landowner. Upon taking ownership of the cave, it was the objective of the Shawnee to quickly restrict unauthorized public access into Ellis Cave before a pattern of public use developed as each winter, Ellis Cave provides habitat for approximately 5,000 Indiana bats, a dozen or less endangered gray bats, and several hundred bats listed by the U.S. Forest Service as "sensitive animal species".



Ellis Cave is significant in that this cave winters the second highest number of Indiana bats in Illinois. In their support to protect these bats, BCI provided the steel for the gate along with the services of Jim Kennedy, Cave Resource Specialist with BCI. Two biologists from the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests provided their welding skills as well.

The valuable assistance provided by BCI and personnel from the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests will work to sustain and enhance populations of federally endangered and other Illinois state-listed bats on the Shawnee National Forest, and with such a successful partnership achieved, the Shawnee looks forward to similar continued efforts.

## ***Barn Owl Recovery Partnership a Success on the Shawnee***

While the barn owl is one of the most widely distributed species of birds, nesting on all continents (except Antarctica) and many islands, barn owls have become rare in portions of North America, especially throughout the Midwest since the early 1900's. From 1990-2010, barn owl nesting was reported from 3 counties, mostly in the southern half of the state. The decline is most strongly correlated with changing agricultural practices, especially the conversion of hay and pasture grasses to row crop agriculture. Today, the barn owl is listed by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) as "*Endangered*," and is noted as a "*Species in Greatest Need of Conservation*" in the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan.



In 2006, the Shawnee NF initiated the Forest's barn owl restoration program by working with vocational agriculture classes at Vienna High School in Johnson County. Students constructed 10 wooden barn owl nesting boxes, which were erected in areas on the Forest having large fields consisting of grasses and forbs. Through this effort, boxes were placed in Johnson and Pope Counties with several quickly being utilized by barn owls for nesting and raising several broods in one summer. In 2013, the Forest partnered with IDNR to erect 13 artificial barn owl nesting boxes. IDNR personnel provided a total of eight barn owl nesting boxes, mounting poles and hardware, cement and crew members to erect the boxes. Adding to this partnership, the Forest provided five boxes and also donated two Forest wildlife personnel to assist in the placement of boxes. Because barn owls are tolerant of human activity and readily nest in barns and other structures, they will readily use artificial boxes for

nesting. Because of this, artificial nest boxes have proven effective for increasing local barn owl populations.

Amy Wingert, a graduate student from the University of Illinois, is currently studying the barn owl in Illinois. The objective of her study is to estimate the barn owl population in Illinois, estimate the species reproductive success and to quantify the most productive habitat. In 2013, she monitored over 200 nest boxes statewide, including boxes erected by the IDNR and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) on National Forest lands. It is hoped that at the conclusion of Ms. Wingert's study, the IDNR and USFS will have a better idea of the success of the nest box program in southern Illinois coupled with a better idea of the best places to erect additional nest boxes in the future. Anyone interested in learning more about the barn owl and/or sources for acquiring nesting boxes can contact IDNR for technical assistance.

## ***Shawnee National Forest Connects with Communities on Climate Change***

In order to engage the public in the topic of climate change and introduce them to the research efforts of the U.S. Forest Service's partnership with the Northern Institute of Applied Climate Science (NIACS), the Shawnee NF hosted a Climate Change Open House in May. Leslie Brandt, Climate Change Specialist, and Chris Swanston, Research Ecologist, NIACS, presented posters on the Central Hardwoods Climate Change Response Framework. The Framework focuses on climate-informed conservation across the Central Hardwoods region of Missouri, Illinois and Indiana through four main components: Partnerships, Vulnerability Assessment, Forest Adaptation Resources and Demonstration Projects.





# *Everything That's Old is New Again...*

## *Searching for the Cherokee Trail of Tears in Southern Illinois*

With the arrival of spring, March was a wonderful time to host a volunteer service learning project searching for Trail of Tears campsites on the Shawnee NF. Volunteers traveled to southern Illinois from all over, including Texas, New York, Maryland, Wisconsin, Michigan, Missouri, and northern Illinois, to participate in this service learning project or PIT (Passport in Time). While the weather was initially pleasant, conditions changed overnight as it turned cold, rainy and blustery, giving the volunteers a taste of the hardships the Cherokee endured while in Illinois. The Trail of Tears National Historic Trail, which commemorates the 1838 removal and forced march of the Cherokee Indians from their eastern homeland in the Smoky Mountains to Oklahoma, extends across southern Illinois, from the Ohio River at Golconda to the Mississippi River. The Cherokee crossed southern Illinois during an unusually cold and harsh winter, and the great majority made the long and arduous journey on foot, making their trek even more heart-rending. At one time during that harsh winter, there were at least five detachments, each containing about 1,000 Cherokee, camped in southern Illinois because the Mississippi River was frozen and dangerous to cross. The river ice was too thick for the ferries to operate but too thin for a wagon to cross.



Southern Illinois University's (SIU) Center for Archaeological Investigations is currently researching possible Trail of Tears camp locations for the National Park Service and is a partner in researching the history of Hamburg Hill during the Trail of Tears. The stretch of road on Hamburg Hill is one of the best preserved, most rustic and scenic original trail segments used during the forced removal, and it almost certainly contains campsites used by the Cherokee as they waited to cross the Mississippi River. The base of Hamburg Hill is a relatively wide hollow that could have accommodated a large number of Cherokee along with their tents, wagons and livestock as they waited to cross. The focus of this Passport in Time project was to search the hollow for artifacts that might have been related to the Trail of Tears.

Each morning for nearly a week, 18 volunteers, six SIU faculty and students, and two U.S. Forest Service archaeologists scrambled down the steep Hamburg Hill Road, 175 years after the Cherokee traveled down the same road on their way westward toward their new home. Days were spent excavating archaeological units in the valley, searching for items that might have been lost by the Cherokee as they camped near Clear Creek. A few early nineteenth century artifacts were recovered, including a small fragment of a green shell-edged plate. Although no items recovered during the volunteer project were conclusively proven to be Cherokee, the Passport in Time volunteers and students enjoyed their time in their out-of-doors classroom and took home many lessons on Cherokee history and culture as part of this service learning project. The volunteers' work also started to fill a gap in knowledge about that terrible yet significant episode in the nation's history called the "trail where they cried," which has now come to be known as the Trail of Tears.



## *Ozark Tours Photograph Exhibit*

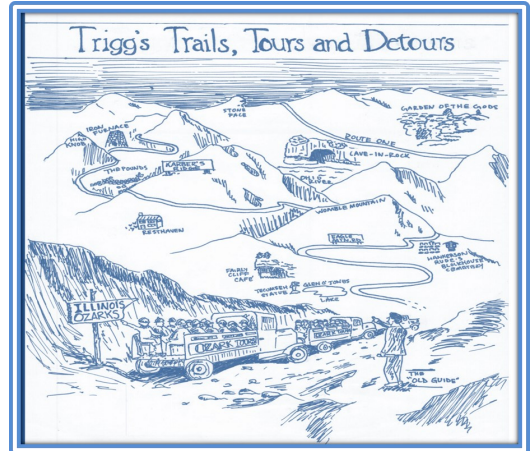
In continued efforts to connect visitors to the past, the Shawnee National Forest Headquarters Office hosted a photograph exhibit prepared by Charles H. Hammond about southern Illinois' historic Ozark Tours. The Ozark Tours of the 1930s and '40s were the creation of Lindolph Oscar Trigg, known to most as Colonel L.O. Trigg, who was very vocal in his insistence that southern Illinois needed a national forest.

## ***Col. Trigg's Comeback Tour and National Public Lands Day!***

In the spirit of celebrating 20 years of connecting people with public lands through service and engagement during annual National Public Lands Day (NPLD) events across the U.S., the Shawnee NF excitedly joined thousands nationwide in providing a variety of informative, hands on activities during NPLD 2013.

In seeking to offer something for everyone, from families eager to enjoy outdoor exploration geared towards the younger set to those ready to get their hands dirty on trail related work, personnel from around the Shawnee began planning months in advance to ensure a fantastic week-end of events that would help 2013 to be a banner year.

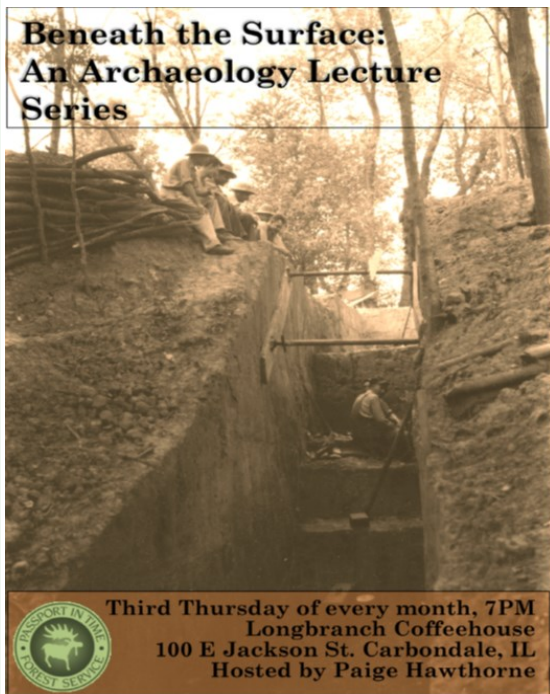
With a historical tie-in all its own, one of the offerings this year included the "Ozark (Comeback) Tour," based upon the Ozark Tours, organized and led by Col. Lindolph Oscar (L.O.) Trigg from 1931 through 1949. Trigg was an early and enthusiastic promoter of a national forest for southern Illinois and dedicated much of his life to showing others the beauty of the region. The Ozark Tours, founded on L.O. Trigg's commitment to the establishment of the Shawnee National Forest, shepherded government officials and area boosters on sight-seeing expeditions to various sites throughout the Forest. In partnership with the Friends of the Shawnee National Forest, the Heritage Program created a two day tour schedule that visited many sites around the eastern part of the Forest, essentially allowing tour attendees to step back in time, re-tracing many of Trigg's original stops and destinations. And like those who traveled with Col. Trigg during his original treks, participants enjoyed meals provided by local restaurants and slept under the stars, camping on Saturday evening at Pounds Hollow Recreation Area. In total, 39 individuals took part in the two day Ozark Tour adventure, including participants and volunteers. Feedback continues to be extremely positive, and plans are being made to continue this historical legacy via future events.



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## ***New Heritage Lecture Series: "Beneath the Surface"***

### **Beneath the Surface: An Archaeology Lecture Series**



In June of 2013, the Shawnee National Forest Heritage Program partnered with the Friends of the Shawnee National Forest to create a brand new monthly series of lectures on the archaeological legacy of southern Illinois entitled "**Beneath the Surface.**" Dedicated to bringing research on local archaeology, forensic anthropology, history and cemetery studies by professional researchers from around the region to the public, the lectures were held on the third Thursday of every month. The hour-long presentations were given by archaeologists working and researching in the local area and were free and open to the public. Topics included southern Illinois Native American rock art, ongoing research at the prehistoric Kincaid site on the Ohio River, Cave-in-Rock pirates, the Cherokee Trail of Tears, prehistoric Native American stone forts, and many other interesting subjects. The lecture series will continue into 2014 with the schedule including talks on Southern Illinois and the Civil War, Illinois and the War of 1812, and Archaeological Investigations at the Bridges Tavern – a site associated with the Cherokee Trail of Tears.



## ***Sharing the Great Outdoors: Education and Outreach Efforts on the Shawnee National Forest***

- ♦ A number of new programs and materials were developed in 2013 to help better engage people of all ages. These include the creation of four photographic banners with animal facial cut-outs for use at fairs & events; development and implementation of new afterschool programs (Young Trekkers and a 4-H Nature Special Interest Club); conservation education student bookmarks; the launch of the Shawnee's Outdoor Questing Program; and two educational kits with focus themes of trees and climate change. One of the Shawnee's most exciting new communication tools is a new mobile interpretive tour that is being piloted for the U.S. Forest Service by the Shawnee NF. Scheduled to launch in spring 2014, this will be a great tool for visitors as site information will be available either by cell or smartphone.
- ♦ Personnel improved their conservation education skills and the Forest broadened its reach as an environmental education provider by attending and/or facilitating a number of trainings and workshops in 2013. Highlights include a *Growing Up Wild* workshop for Southern 7 Head Start teachers and administrators in mid-February. This workshop was made possible via support from Whitetails Unlimited and was the first time that the organization had supported such an event in Illinois. Growing Up Wild is a nature-based early childhood program through the Council of Environmental Education. Two employees also attended a Nature Explore Workshop, which provided techniques for bringing nature exploration into the everyday life of children and specifically into the classroom. Other workshops included the Shawnee's work to co-host a National Association for Interpretation (NAI) Certified Interpretive Guide Train the Trainer course, (one of only a handful held in the U.S. annually) a Flying Wild workshop and Project Learning Tree workshop.
- ♦ **With support from personnel across the Forest, the Public Affairs team, Forest interpreter and AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers were able to reach a total of 4,200 students across 32 schools through 21 public programs for a grand total of 11,372 people served across southern Illinois.** A variety of subjects were shared including wilderness resources, outdoor safety, prescribed burning and oak-history restoration, natural resource careers, invasive species, GIS applications, Dirt Detectives, pollinators and nocturnal animals. In addition to the school-based programs, the team also helped to plan, implement and coordinate the following annual events: Stewardship Week, Fish Tales, activities for Illinois Invasive Species Awareness Month, ArborWild, National Public Lands Day and Critter Night.



- ♦ On August 9th, 2013, the Shawnee NF celebrated Smokey Bear's 69<sup>th</sup> Birthday. The event was held at the Shawnee National Forest Headquarters, located in Harrisburg. The public was invited to come out and join Smokey Bear for a special birthday part in his honor. The event featured an open house from 11:00 a.m. to 2 p.m., allowing attendees a chance to enjoy hugs and high fives, photos and more. As one might imagine, there were a lot of smiles and great memories made. No birthday would be complete without traditional party streamers, banners and balloons for decorations too, and thanks to the personnel, there was also cake, cookies, brownies and punch. During the event, a Smokey Bear themed fire prevention movie was shown on the large monitor for all to watch. The children attending were given a Smokey Bear pencil bag full of goodies (the perfect back to school birthday bash gift) too and had the opportunity to have their picture taken with Smokey Bear.

- ♦ Inspired by the cultural phenomenon such as "Where's Waldo" and "Flat Stanley," the Shawnee NF launched a new "[Where's Woodsy](#)" campaign in late 2013. Along with sharing his message of "Lend a Hand, Care for the Land," Woodsy Owl also helps educate the public and visitors about the variety of work done by Forest Service employees. Another advantage of this fun outreach effort is encouraging the public to come visit unique areas in the Forest. A photo of Woodsy Owl at work on the Shawnee is posted periodically on the Forest's website along with clues about where he is and what he's doing. The public then has the opportunity to submit their answer to the Shawnee NF as to where they think Woodsy Owl has been that week.





## ***Local Boy Scout Troop Assists Shawnee National Forest with Warbler Habitat Improvement Project***

Each year, the Hidden Springs Ranger District works with local Boy Scout troops to help local scouts attain their Eagle Scout Rank. In this capacity, the Shawnee National Forest (NF) typically supports as many as five different Eagle Scout projects each year, and 2013 proved to be no different.



Back in late 2012, a local Boy Scout from Troop 7041 in Vienna, Illinois contacted the Shawnee NF, about the possibility of the Forest providing a project to enable him to earn his Eagle Scout Rank. The Forest had been preparing for such a project after talking with Dr. Jeff Hoover, Avian Ecologist with the Illinois Natural History Survey. Dr. Hoover has been conducting bird surveys at Oakwood Bottoms and Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge and had commented that while there are some prothonotary warblers present at Oakwood Bottoms, the population was not very high. This initiated the idea for a possible Eagle Scout Project constructing nest boxes for prothonotary warblers. The prothonotary warbler is one of the most brilliant and beautiful woodland warblers that nest only in tree cavities in wooded wetlands throughout southern Illinois. The Shawnee NF is located along the northernmost extension for the species' summer range.

In preparation for the project, the troop worked on cutting out and assembling the nest boxes over the winter with a target of erecting the boxes at Oakwood Bottoms before the onset of the spring nesting season. With the arrival of the new year, at the onset of spring, Boy Scouts and parent from Troop 7041 along with their Scout Master, met with Forest employees at Oakwood Bottoms on March 23, 2013. Through much hard work and determination, all 15 nest boxes were successfully placed at borrow pits throughout Oakwood Bottoms. Borrow pits were chosen for placement of the prothonotary warbler nest boxes since they hold water throughout the year, and the boxes were placed on 8 foot steel T-posts to protect their residents from predators.

Thanks to the work provided by Boy Scout Troop 7041, nesting habitat for the prothonotary warbler at Oakwood Bottoms has been substantially improved, and Shawnee NF wildlife personnel will be monitoring the nest boxes to determine occupancy and overall nesting success.

## ***Supporting the Shawnee: Overview of Volunteer Efforts in 2013***

***The Shawnee Volunteer Corps continue to integrate in to many other Forest programs. Below are accomplishment highlights for 2013:***

- New Volunteer Agreements: 243
- Volunteer Inquiries (other than service day opportunities): 48
  - Internal Requests Processed for Other Programs: 22

### ***Volunteer Program Trail Work:***

- Miles of Trail Maintenance Conducted by Volunteers: 6.53
- Miles of Trail Reconstruction Conducted by Volunteers: .50

<b>Program</b>	<b>Accumulated Hours</b>	<b>Appraised Dollar Value</b>	<b>*Person Years</b>
Botany	131.50	\$2,911.41	.07
Heritage	1,770.0	\$39,187.72	.98
Conservation Education/ Interpretation	7754.0	\$171,673.56	4.31
Developed/Dispersed Recreation	11.5	\$254.61	.01
Trail Maintenance and Wilderness	3,015.50	\$66,763.17	1.68
Wildlife	14	\$309.96	.01
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>12,696.50</b>	<b>\$281,100.51</b>	<b>7.05</b>

◆ Person Years = 1 Full Time Employee

## ***Wetland Conservation Efforts Boosted by Successful Partnerships and Major Grants***

Continuing the longstanding partnership with the Shawnee National Forest, Ducks Unlimited led an effort to build two grant proposals in 2013; 1) North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) proposal and 2) Illinois Habitat Stamp Fund proposal, that together, will restore or enhance over 3000 acres of bottomland habitat. The group of partners was successful at receiving both grants in 2013 though implementation is planned in 2014 and 2015.



The \$1M NAWCA grant will fund several habitat improvements both on the Shawnee National Forest and Cypress Creek National Fish and Wildlife Refuge. For the Shawnee National Forest, the work will be focused in the Big Muddy River Bottomlands and will include wetland restorations and enhancements in and around Oakwood Bottoms Greentree Reservoir. The Oakwood Bottoms site has been managed as a for-

ested wetland since the 1960's and provides approximately 4700 acres of wetland habitat, critical for migrating and wintering waterfowl. The NAWCA grant will be used to enhance the water delivery and drainage systems to improve water management capabilities on 4 wetland impoundments covering over 1200 acres, and improve the overall management of the green-tree reservoir and associated wetland habitats. In the past, poor water control (i.e., slow drainage, early flooding) has negatively affected the quality of the hardwood forest. Improved water delivery and discharge will facilitate more efficient flooding and expedient drawdowns. This will result in increased regeneration of the oak/hickory forest, improve the overall forest health, and maximize the wildlife benefits. Outside of Oakwood Bottoms, we have identified an additional 250 acres of wetland restorations within the Big Muddy River floodplain for a total of 1759 acres impacted on the Shawnee by this NAWCA project.



The \$57,278 Illinois Habitat Stamp Grant was also awarded and will fund an additional 418 acres of habitat improvements in the Big Muddy River bottomlands. Specifically, this project includes timber stand improvements, the creation of moist soil openings, and restoration work at Turkey Bayou, a backwater lake along the Big Muddy River. The National Wild Turkey Federation, Ducks Unlimited and Illinois Department of Natural Resources have all partnered with the Shawnee National Forest and plan to begin implementation of this project in 2014.



## ***2013 Recreational Highlights...***

### ***???Did You Know???***

***The Shawnee National Forest Community Service/Sustainable Recreation Programs Unit was selected as the U.S. Forest Service 2012 Volunteer Program Unit of the Year !***

### ***Volunteers Lend a Hand to Map Invasive Species to Protect Lands While Enjoying the Great Outdoors***

On September 28, 2013, a group of enthusiastic volunteers met to celebrate national public lands and to take inventory of invasive species along Indian Point Trail in Garden of the Gods Wilderness. The event was organized by the River to River Cooperative Weed Management Area (RTRCWMA), the U.S. Forest Service - Shawnee National Forest and Beautify Southern Illinois. All total, twenty-four volunteers participated, representing a variety of groups from across the region, including Southern Illinois University Carbondale (Beautify Southern Illinois, Department of Plant Biology, and Department of Forestry), Unity Point School, Golconda Job Corps, University of Illinois Master Naturalists and Ozark Koala Ecosystem Services.

During the endeavor, the group was trained to identify four invasive species - autumn olive, garlic mustard, Japanese stiltgrass, and multiflora rose - and learned how these non-native invasive species impact native species and change the environment. For example, garlic mustard invades the forest understory and produces long-lasting chemicals that prevent native plants from growing and does not provide food for many animals; this negatively impacts the food web and harms the biodiversity of the ecosystem. To help locate problematic species, volunteers were given GPS units before setting out to hike the scenic trail, recording the occurrences of all the invasives observed. Additionally, volunteers pulled the Japanese stiltgrass at the trailhead just in time to prevent it from producing seed this year. The GPS coordinates collected by the group will be used to create a map, which will guide future invasive species management at Indian Point Trail with the assistance and dedication of students from Golconda Job Corps, who have adopted the trail.

In addition to talking invasives, an aquatic lesson was given at an area pond, providing attendees an engaging opportunity to learn about area watersheds and why they were important.



*Photo Caption: Pond at Garden of the Gods*



*Photo Caption: Wild Visitors at the Hidden Springs Ranger Station in Vienna.*

## ***News from the Shawnee Fire Team***



Shawnee NF firefighters responded to a wildfire at the Little Grand Canyon Recreation Area in Jackson County. The fire was an estimated 18 acres, and approximately 35 personnel from the Shawnee NF and the Midewin Hot Shot Crew, along with staff from Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge, handled the fire. Assistance was also provided by local area fire departments. The terrain in the area was steep and had experienced an extreme progressive derecho, which resulted in a lot of blown down trees, branches, etc. This added to the complex nature of the fire.

In October, the Shawnee Fire Program began to gear up for the fall wildland fire and prescribed burn season. Ten seasonal firefighters were hired and attended 60 hours of required training. The fire crews were able to complete 885 acres of prescribed burning in November and continue to prepare additional areas for prescribed burning in the spring of 2014. Wildland fire activity was slow in the fall with only 3 small fires reported.

### ***Special Emphasis Program Accomplishments...***

- \* Attended a College of Agriculture Career Fair at Tennessee State University, located in Nashville, TN. During the event, information was shared with approximately 150 agriculture and biology majors.
- \* Presented a "how to" session on applying for U.S. Forest Service positions to 65 students at Southeastern Illinois University
- \* Distributed agency employment information to 300 local area high school seniors and 150 adults as part of a large -scale regional job fair. The event was held at the Rent One Park, home of the Southern Illinois Miners (a minor league baseball team), located in Marion, Illinois.
- \* Participated in the State-wide Veterans Job Fair at Southwestern Illinois College in Belleville, Illinois. The event reached out to veterans and non-veteran job seekers with information about area jobs including jobs with the Forest Service.

### ***Smokey Bear Throws First Pitch!***

In late May, the Shawnee celebrated "Forest Night" with the Southern Illinois Miners with everyone's favorite, Smokey Bear, throwing the first pitch of the game. The Forest also provided an informational booth. Total attendance for the game was over 4,500.



## ***2013 National Visitor Use Monitoring Survey Program***

The National Visitor Use Monitoring Survey program came to a conclusion on September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2013. All total, 282 surveys were conducted between October 2012 and September 2013. Work involved Shawnee NF personnel visiting wilderness trail-heads, day use areas, campgrounds and general forest areas to gather information from recreating visitors.

Three part-time employees were specifically hired to assist in the data collection starting in the spring of 2013, but many full time and seasonal employees pitched in throughout the year. AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers were also utilized, giving them a chance to see new areas of the forest and interact with the public.



The information collected will give the Shawnee a better understanding of who our visitors are, why they come to the Shawnee NF, how satisfied they are with the facilities and services provided, and how much they spend while visiting. Ultimately, the results will be used to make decisions in forest management.

### ***Engaging with Engineering: An Overview of 2013 Projects***



- \* A well was drilled at Johnson Creek Campground to provide potable water for the campground.
- \* Work was done to provide for electrical hook-ups at Pine Ridge Campground at Pounds Hollow Recreation Area in Gallatin County.
- \* Finished final repairs to the damage done on the Opossum Trot Road and Larue Road from the 2011 landslide. The Larue Rd. landslide involved the placement of soil nails to hold the bluff line in place and prevent future slide action in this area. The location slid several years ago, and repairs were made to hold the slope; however, excessive rains in 2011 saturated the remaining soil and caused the remainder of the grade to come down onto the roadway.
- \* The Jonesboro Office foundation was in need of repairs. Previously, water had been seeping into the building along the south and east sides of the building. The work will install a water barrier on the foundation, replace the foundation drain and grade the slope away from the building.





## *Highlights from the Friends of the Shawnee National Forest*

The Friends of the Shawnee National Forest (FSNF) worked throughout 2013 to support U.S. Forest Service (USFS) efforts and engage communities throughout southern Illinois. The group's work has also encompassed promoting stewardship and environmental education via programming and special events. Focus areas for the Friends included increasing awareness through youth targeted programs, offering free public education lectures and promoting interest in cultivating relationships among the FSNF and other organizations within area communities. Through such efforts, the FSNF goal is to grow and strengthen the network of outdoor programming providers as well as to educate and connect the residents of Illinois with the Shawnee National Forest.

In 2013, the Friends developed, in connection with the USFS, a public archeological lecture series and an interactive youth workshop centered on understanding and connecting to ways of life from the past. FSNF also hosted a series of responsible, outdoor self-reliance workshops to a local residential education summer camp. In September, the Friends teamed up with the USFS to support National Public Lands Day efforts, reviving the historic L.O. Trigg Ozark Tours. The FSNF have also been asked to partner with a local environmental center to co-develop a new outdoor education summer camp for 2014 for regional adolescents. Currently, the group leads a monthly on-site education day for local children throughout the Shawnee National Forest as well. Programs focus on a variety of topics, including water quality, interpretive hiking, historic archeology and natural resource uses. Ultimately, the greatest efforts are centered on youth programs designed to build a greater understanding, appreciation and intellectual development related to the Forest and other natural resources as each endeavor is designed to create a path to lifelong learning about the natural environment.

Establishing and developing partnerships with other organizations throughout Illinois has been, and will continue to be, a communications program where resources can be pooled and collaborated. The FSNF will grow through new and existing programs, coupled with professional connections, to reach a larger audience. Overall, the goal is to establish an inclusive network of communication where stewardship and community engagement are cornerstones.

